

VZCZCXRO9580
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #0405/01 1171012
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 271012Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2132
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3056
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1350
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3396
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2782
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000405

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HOSTS BRIEFING ON EXCHANGE PROGRAMS FOR
KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: A. BISHKEK 237

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 246

[1](#)C. BISHKEK 267

[1](#)D. BISHKEK 382

BISHKEK 00000405 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ambassador hosted Foreign Minister Sarbayev and American Council's Country Director at her home for an informal meeting to review the educational and professional exchange programs between the United States and the Kyrgyz Republic. Sarbayev was generally positive about the programs and their impact on Kyrgyzstan, but questioned the selection process for students and possible preference for opposition politicians among higher-level programs. This was the fifth in a series of informal meetings that the Ambassador is organizing to brief Sarbayev on U.S. assistance programming. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Foreign Minister Sarbayev met with Ambassador and AmCit Everett Peachey, the country director of American Councils, on April 21 for the fifth in a series of informal meetings to increase understanding of the purpose and modalities of U.S. assistance programs. American Councils is a non-government organization that administers exchange programs on behalf of the U.S. government. Peachey and Cultural Affairs Officer reviewed the various programs that send nearly 200 Kyrgyz citizens a year to the United States and include over 3000 Kyrgyz among their alumni.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Sarbayev listened with interest and remarked that the programs were great and that he could understand why so many Kyrgyz want to travel to the U.S. He asked how a typical student might be chosen for an exchange program, noting that his daughter asked him whether she should apply. Peachey, using the FLEX high school program as an example, explained that the process is transparent, multi-stage, and very rigorous. Sarbayev agreed, though admitted that he had advised his daughter to study in China instead because Chinese exchange programs are "simpler and easier" to be

chosen for.

¶4. (SBU) Sarbayev also asked whether the Embassy chose only opposition figures for higher level programs like the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) or the Library of Congress-funded Open World program. He pointed out that current government officials like President Bakiyev and Vice Prime Minister Babanov had been selected when both were in the opposition. The Ambassador, CAO, and Peachey explained that government officials are, in fact, included in programs, citing several examples. When Sarbayev heard about the IVLP trip "U.S. Bases and Their Neighbors" that had included Kyrgyz officials, he asked with a half-grin why those officials have not been more vocal in defending Manas Base in Kyrgyzstan.

¶5. (SBU) Sarbayev said that he hoped that the Embassy included more government officials in the future. He cited the example of China, which he claims brings officials from several ministries each year to China for trainings and tours. He recalled that approximately eight Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees a year visited China when he was Ambassador there.

¶6. (C) Sarbayev also seized on the exchange program that brings students from Turkmenistan to study at the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek (Note: The TASP program funded through Freedom Support Act funds. End note.) He commented, "They (the Turkmen) are richer than us, but we still help them." He made several derisive comments about the quality of Turkmen education and former President Niyazov's reforms there, before adding that he was not surprised that Turkmen students want to study in Kyrgyzstan.

BISHKEK 00000405 002.2 OF 002

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Sarbayev was generally aware of the exchange programs sponsored by the U.S. government, though mildly surprised at the breadth and total number of participants. He seemed to realize the value of education and openness. When promoting these programs, Post emphasizes the need for Kyrgyzstan to improve its human capital in order to compete economically with its natural resource-rich neighbors. Kyrgyz officials are relatively supportive of such a strategy, hosting several foreign-funded universities, for example. Sarbayev is not a major player in educational affairs, and his apparent support for our programs is not always shared by other parts of the Kyrgyz government. Sarbayev's concern about perceived favoritism for the opposition in our exchange programs seems to reflect a broader suspicion towards U.S. assistance programs. However, after going over the selection process in detail, Sarbayev did seem open to accepting that our educational programs are run in an open and transparent manner.
GFOELLER